

## Fourth Grade Writing Lesson #1 with Narrative Prompt

- Title:** The Best of Times, the Worst of Times
- Grade:** Fourth Grade
- Core Standards:** 4040-0801  
4040-0802  
4040-0804  
4040-0806
- Objective/Purpose:** Students will produce a narrative about a personal experience, with a focus on the trait of organization. The text should have an inviting introduction and satisfying conclusion.
- Time Required:** 3-4 class periods (45 minutes each)
- Teacher Materials:** Books dealing with best/worst experiences  
*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst  
*Thank You, Mr. Falker*, Patricia Polacco  
*The Bee Tree*, Patricia Polacco  
*Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*, Kevin Henkes  
*Chrysanthemum*, Kevin Henkes  
Graphic organizer (story map)
- Extensions:** For review of sequencing. Have students practice sequencing by cutting up short, well organized text. Text can be taken from one of the suggested titles but should not exceed six or seven lines. Have students organize the strips in logical sequence. (Reference: *Creating Writers* by Vicki Spandell, p. 162.)
- Adding voice to language. Read snippets of familiar children's authors. Have students guess who the author is.
- What to Do:**
1. Read one or several of the suggested titles and model, thinking aloud. Pause throughout the reading to model personal thinking about similar experiences. Invite students to make connections also.
  2. Demonstrate, using the graphic organizer, the organization of the book read in step 1.

3. Model writing a best or worst experience by filling in experiences on the graphic organizer.
4. Show students the writing prompt for this lesson. Have them complete the graphic organizer for their own best/worst story.
5. Give students time to draft their stories.
6. Craft story leads and conclusions by sharing both good and poor examples. Have students write two new leads and conclusions for their stories and then pick their favorite.
7. Give students time to revise and edit.

**Writing Prompt:** We all have good and bad days. Think of a time you had a really good or bad day. Think about what happened, how you felt, and why you still remember it. Write about your experience.

Student Paper #1  
(Fourth Grade Student)

Title: "The Deadly Penny"

## The Deadly Penny

"Achoo!" my mom screamed, "I can't breathe that well!" I moaned I had been in my room because no one wanted to play with me. I started to play with my coins and suddenly the horror struck. I swallowed a penny but some how I survived. Although I survived, I was sick and had to go to the hospital.

My mom ran over to me and picked me up. She ran to our garage. "What is happening?" my brothers asked while my mom was explaining to them what happened, I was in intense pain, you can't believe how much it hurt. I thought I was going to die.

When my mom finished explaining to them what happened, my dad came home and wanted to know what happened. My mom said that my brothers would tell him. She ran to the car and we sped off. The whole way my mom was soothing me and telling me it would be okay. It helped only a little.

When we got to the hospital my mom rushed me to the ER and explained what happened. We then sat down and waited for a bit. That little amount of time seemed like hours. When we finally met with the doctors I thought that I was already dead.

They put me in a big and cold room. They

then stuck some thing up my nose. After that I don't really remember what happened until I got out and then my mom told me that it was okay and the penny was out. We got home and the rest of the family was very happy that I was okay. I felt really good after that and not in pain.

After that night I never put a penny near my mouth and hope I never do.

**Student Paper #1: Scores  
(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Scores and Commentary**

**Title: “The Deadly Penny”**

**IDEAS AND CONTENT: [4]**

The writer holds the reader's attention and is writing from experience. Ideas are reasonably clear, although they may lack detail.

**ORGANIZATION: [4]**

The title is original. The organization flows, but the paper lacks a satisfying conclusion.

**VOICE: [5]**

The writing is honest, personal and engaging. The tone of the writing is appropriate and holds the reader's interest.

**WORD CHOICE: [3]**

The writer makes attempts at colorful language. More precise wording could be used in a couple of places. It appears that the writer selected the first words that came into mind.

**SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]**

The writer gets the job done in a routine fashion. Sentence beginnings need more variety and energy.

**CONVENTIONS: [3]**

The writer attempts the use of quotations but does not always punctuate them properly. Otherwise, spelling and punctuation are generally correct.

**Student Paper #2**  
**(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Title: "The Wet Pants"**

**The Wet Pants**

One day when I was in the cafeteria drinking my milk, I dropped my milk carton on myself while there was still milk in it! I was sooo embarrassed!

I had to go and get a rag from the lunch ladies and mop it up off the floor. After I was done with that I walked real fast to the playground.

When I got outside, I went straight to the monkey bars. I got up onto them and started going around the bars. Then a boy I didn't even know said, "Hey, did you wet your pants?"

I looked down at my pants. It really did look like I had wet my pants. I was even more embarrassed than I already was!

I jumped off the monkey bars and ran to the grass. I tried to make my jeans dry. I even laid down on the grass face up so the sun would dry my jeans.

Suddenly the bell rang. Oh, no! My pants were still wet! I ran to my line and tried to cover up my jeans.

As soon as I got to my classroom I sat down in my seat thinking, "I can't wait to go home."

**Student Paper #2: Scores  
(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Scores and Commentary**

**Title: “The Wet Pants”**

**IDEAS AND CONTENT: [5]**

This paper is clear and focused and gives accurate details. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.

**ORGANIZATION: [4]**

The organization flows smoothly. The ending is satisfying, but paper could use a more compelling beginning.

**VOICE: [5]**

The writer takes risk throughout the piece. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer.

**WORD CHOICE: [3]**

The writer attempts to use some colorful language, but the paper lacks memorable words and phrases. The writing could benefit from more active verbs.

**SENTENCE FLUENCY: [4]**

This paper has an easy flow and rhythm. It could use more purposeful and varied sentence beginnings.

**CONVENTIONS: [5]**

The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions.



**Student Paper #3**  
**(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Title: "The Day"**

## "The Day"

One typical morning on Monday April 19, 2004 I had to go to school. My annoying, little brother Randall comes to school with my friends and I. "Russel come down and practice piano" my mom yelled so I can hear it. While I was practicing, the doorbell rang... it was my friend Dylan and his brother Deion, sister Danica they came to pick us up.

When we got to Escalante, my friends were waiting for me, while suddenly the bell rang harshly "ding, dong, ding, dong." When recess came, two of my good friends, Andrew and Joseph came to play "Follow the leader." Once were playing I took a shortcut under the bridge to get in front, I didn't duck low enough... I dashed toward the bridge so greatly, I felt dead like a doornail, fell to the ground.

All I heard was murmuring about my head bleeding. So I was sent home, then I went to the hospital with my dad, went to go see a doctor and see if I gatt stitches. Well it wasn't that deep so they glued it. I looked in the mirror "Nasty looking" I mumbled. Well, I turned out to be okay, nothing hurt, and since, I was way more careful ever since.



**Student Paper #3: Scores  
(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Scores and Commentary**

**Title: “The Day”**

**IDEAS AND CONTENT: [3]**

The paper includes supporting details, but not enough to flesh out the story. Some unnecessary details are included that detract from the writing.

**ORGANIZATION: [3]**

Most sequencing is logical, but the introduction doesn’t transition well into subsequent paragraphs. The lead and conclusion are fairly strong, however.

**VOICE: [3]**

The voice is pleasant but not compelling. There are moments when the voice shines, but generally it is a “safe” attempt.

**WORD CHOICE: [4]**

The writer uses some strong verb choices. (Examples: *murmuring*, *dashed*, *mumbled*.) The writer also attempts to select words appropriately, as in “My *annoying* little brother Randall comes to school with my friends...”

**SENTENCE FLUENCY: [4]**

The writer incorporates a variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths.

**CONVENTIONS: [4]**

There are a few errors. The writer experiments with some complex conventions and punctuation, such as quotations and ellipses.

**AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:**

- Details relevant to the story
- Improved transitions between paragraphs

**Student Paper #4  
(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Title: "My Good Day"**

## **My Good Day**

My good day that I am going to tell you about happened in third Grade. I was at the A. R. store. My teacher was Mrs. Turk.

I had been saving points for a lava lamp. It was the perfect color (pink and purple) for my room. I knew exactly where I would put the lamp. I wanted it so bad, I really hoped no one had taken it, otherwise I would have saved one hundred points for nothing. All year long I had worked hard to save those points. I earned the points by reading books and taking tests.

Crossing my fingers I went inside. Yes! It was still there.

Back in the class room everyone wanted to see it. "Congratulations!" said Mrs. Turk. I learned that working hard pays off. It turned out to be a good day!

**Student Paper #4: Scores  
(Fourth Grade Student)**

**Scores and Commentary**

**Title: “My Good Day”**

**IDEAS AND CONTENT: [4]**

There is general development of an idea, but not much support in fleshing out the beginning of the story. Stronger support in the middle and end of the paper is needed.

**ORGANIZATION: [4]**

The organization is clear, if not predictable.

**VOICE: [3]**

There are only a few moments when the personality of the writer really shines. Otherwise, the voice is not very engaging.

**WORD CHOICE: [3]**

Word choice is adequate, but does not stand out. Passive verbs are often used.

**SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]**

Too many sentences are short and choppy, although some variety is evident.

**CONVENTIONS: [5]**

The writer has a good grasp of writing conventions.

**AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:**

- Add stronger details, especially in the introduction.
- Vary sentence lengths.
- Select active, lively verbs.